



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

FEB 11 2009

The Honorable Christine O. Gregoire
Governor
State of Washington
Olympia, Washington 98504-0002

S2854

Dear Governor Gregoire:

Thank you for your letter of November 20, 2008, to former Secretary of Agriculture Edward T. Schafer, requesting a disaster designation for 13 Washington counties due to losses caused by multiple disasters that occurred in 2008.

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) has reviewed the Loss Assessment Reports for all 13 counties, along with the additional information submitted by the State Executive Director, Farm Service Agency (FSA). Based on this review, USDA has determined that there were sufficient production losses in nine counties to warrant a Secretarial disaster designation. Therefore, I am designating nine Washington counties as primary natural disaster areas due to the combined effects of multiple disasters, including drought, unusually cool weather, and freezes that occurred during the period January 1, through December 31, 2008. Those nine counties are:

| | | |
|--------|----------|-----------|
| Adams | Douglas | Klickitat |
| Asotin | Franklin | Lincoln |
| Chelan | Grant | Yakima |

In accordance with section 321(a) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act, additional areas of your State are named as contiguous disaster counties. Those counties are:

| | | | |
|----------|----------|-----------|-------------|
| Benton | King | Pierce | Spokane |
| Columbia | Kittitas | Skagit | Stevens |
| Ferry | Lewis | Skamania | Walla Walla |
| Garfield | Okanogan | Snohomish | Whitman |

We were unable to confirm that sufficient production losses occurred in Benton, Columbia, Kittitas, and Walla Walla Counties.

None of those four counties sustained a 30-percent or greater production loss in a single enterprise due to the natural disaster. In addition, the farmers in those counties who sustained qualifying losses were able to secure commercial financing to cover these losses and therefore are not qualified to receive emergency loans. Therefore I am unable to approve your request for the designation of Benton, Columbia, Kittitas, and Walla Walla Counties, Washington, as primary natural disaster areas.

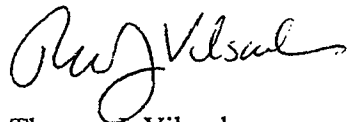
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However, all four counties will be eligible for FSA assistance since they are named as contiguous counties for this disaster, as indicated above.

This designation makes farm operators in both primary and contiguous counties eligible to be considered for assistance from FSA, provided eligibility requirements are met. This assistance includes FSA emergency loans and the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program which was approved as part of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008. FSA will consider each application on its own merit by taking into account the extent of losses, security available, and repayment ability.

Local FSA offices can provide affected farmers with further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Vilsack", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary